Being held to account: Detainees' perceptions of police body-worn cameras

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Abstract

Police organisations across the world are embracing body worn video (BWV) technology. The justification for this is to enhance public trust in police, provide transparency in policing activity, increase police accountability, and to provide a police perspective of incidents and events. However, the corpus of research into the effects and operational practicalities of police use of BWV is in its infancy. The majority of scholarship hitherto has been evaluations focusing on the impact of the cameras on police use of force and complaints against the police as key dependent variables. This article explores BWV from the perspective of police detainees, and specifically, the capacity of BWV to deliver increased levels of accountability in policing. The article draws on research interviews with 907 police detainees across four Australian jurisdictions. Responses from detainees indicated their belief that BWV could deliver increased levels of police (and citizen) accountability echoing the rhetoric of police management. We explore these responses and ask the question as to whether police BWV can live up to such expectations? We conclude by suggesting that there are still a number of impediments between BWVs' clear capacity to provide a 'new visibility' and achieving the level of accountability promised by advocates and expected by the respondents.

Keywords:

Police Accountability / Body Worn Video / Transparency in Policing / Surveillance / Arrest

Introduction

Technological developments in digital image capture have, in recent years, seen the development of increasingly low cost, compact, lightweight digital video cameras offering high resolution image quality and audio recording. These devices are supported by high capacity storage capabilities that have enabled the retention of massive amounts of data. Expansion in the field is reflected in the adoption of these technologies in consumer items such as mobile phones and other wearable technologies. Aside from their prevalence in, for example, sports and leisure, mobile digital video devices also have a range of professional applications, including in law enforcement and security. This growth has also seen the adoption of body-worn video (BWV) cameras by police organisations internationally. BWVs allow police to record video images while undertaking their policing activities. Applications include filming at the time of arrest, during general police-public interactions, and during public order policing amongst other functions. However, the use of these cameras has raised

concerns relating to privacy, impact on the behaviour of police and accused persons, and the use of video images in evidence and resolution of complaints against police.

While the aims of rolling out the cameras are multiple, accountability and transparency on the part of police has been a key claim by advocates of the devices. For example as Kidd (2015 para. 3) reported, in Australia, the New South Wales (NSW) Police Commissioner Andrew Scipione declared that "the cameras would keep both police, and the people they deal with, accountable". Similarly, in the UK context, the then London Mayor Boris Johnson also buoyantly asserted:

> "This is exciting technology that will build trust, help the police do their jobs, and allow the public to hold officers more accountable. Our plans for the roll-out of body-worn video will make the technology available to more officers in a single city than anywhere else in the world and is a giant step towards a truly 21st-century police force for London (cited in Siddique 2015 para. 4)."

Indeed, there has been huge support amongst senior police officials and politicians for the investment in, and use of, police BWV, premised on the presumed ability for the cameras to improve police accountability, and improve police-public relations.

While initial evaluations of the use of BWV by police have generally been positive (eg. Ariel et al 2015; Ellis et al 2015; Hedberg et al, 2016; Katz et al 2014), there are significant gaps in the knowledge base. There is also a dearth of research into the perceptions of the public about BWV (cf. Ellis et al 2015) and, as far as the authors are aware, no research into the perceptions and attitudes of those most likely to be subject to filming by police – police arrestees. This article draws on data generated by an Australian Criminology Research Grant project into perceptions of BWV and CCTV in arrestees – or more specifically, police detainees. Data collection took place in 2015 in conjunction with the Drug Use Monitoring in Australia (DUMA) in Australia program[1], which researches drug use patterns among police detainees.

A range of themes emerged from the interviews with detainees. One overarching theme was again that of accountability. That is, many detainees believed that BWV could increase the accountability of police for their behaviour by providing evidence of police actions in their dealing with the public, and for rendering these actions more transparent. But is BWV capable of achieving the expected levels of accountability? As Manning (2015 para. 9) has argued;

> It has been proposed that miniature cameras worn on the uniform will increase accountability. This claim has no empirical basis. There has been little systematic research on the question. Police typically announce the success of innovations before they are evaluated. The police position generally is, "Why would we do it if we did not think it would improve things?"

Moreover, as Palmer (2016) explains in relation to public discourse (also see Ellis et al 2015), expectations of what BWV can achieve have been set very high, not least an expectation that police behaviour can be improved through greater accountability.

[1] More information on the DUMA program can be accessed here: http://www.aic.gov.au/about_aic/research_programs/nmp/duma/about.html

This article is organised as follows. First, it examines the expectations placed on the use of BWV in terms of accountability and explores the capacity of the technology and police organisations to deliver on these expectations. The article then maps the proliferation of BWV before exploring the notion of police accountability and what achieving accountability might entail. It then moves on to discuss transparency in policing and how this relates to accountability. Following a section on methodology, the data from the DUMA related research project is presented. Finally, we discuss the expectations of police accountability implicit in this data and the capability and desire of police organisations to meet these expectations.

The Rise and Rise of Body Worn Video

The use of BWVs by police represents a relatively new development internationally, including Australia where our study is based. Dating back to an initial trial in Western Australia in 2007, most jurisdictions within Australia have since trialled, or are planning to trial, police BWVs with frontline police officers. In May 2014, the NSW Government released a media statement in relation to funds being made available for NSW police, the third biggest police force in the world, for BWVs for frontline police officers. The Police and Emergency Services Minister Stuart Ayres noted that the 'NSW Police Force [had] been trialling the use of body worn video for frontline officers with very positive results'. According to the media release:

> Following the success of the trials, funding will be made available to roll-out BWV devices to frontline police, with priority given to Public Order and Riot Squad, Police Transport Command, and other highly mobile frontline officers. Key benefits include: changes in behaviour of potential offenders by virtue of merely being recorded; providing police and members of the public with an independent and accurate recording of events; [and] reduction in frivolous claims against police for misconduct whilst undertaking their duties (NSW Government 2014: 1).

Recent scholarship has attempted to understand the impact of body-worn cameras on a range of variables. These include police use of force in police-citizen encounters and complaints against the police (Ariel, Farrar and Sutherland, 2015; Hedberg, Katz and Choate, 2016). Positive results suggested a reduction in 'the prevalence of use-of-force by the police as well as the incidence of citizens' complaints against the police' (Ariel, Farrar and Sutherland, 2015: 531). Likewise Ready and Young (2015) noted the positive influence of BWV in making officers less likely to stop and search or to arrest, but more likely to give citations and initiate encounters, perhaps suggesting some early indications of net-widening. The findings relating to reduced use of force and complaints against the police have been enthusiastically promoted by police organisations (eg. NSW Police 2016) However, a recent meta-analysis by Ariel et al (2016a) found that the use of BWV had no overall effect on police use of force despite some localised improvements, but when officers chose when to turn cameras on and off, use of force rates were 71% higher compared to control conditions. Moreover, they reported a 15% increase in assaults against police officers wearing BWVs suggesting that the cameras could sometimes aggravate a situation rather than appease it. Taylor (2016) has noted the potential for BWVs to have a provoking effect, particularly when mental health issues, drug and alcohol use, and sensitive investigations are involved. Without further

research it is not possible to know why this increase in assaults might have taken place; it may be simply that officers themselves are more likely to report assaults against them with the supporting evidence provided by BWV. If this is the case, it also highlights the challenges of evaluating the new technology. What is clear, however, is that police organisations internationally (eg. McPartland 2014; Sharma 2015; Janus 2016; Vincent 2016) are embracing BWV and there are relatively high expectations attached to this uptake.

The small body of research on police and public opinion has generally also supported the uptake of BWV. For example Smykla, *et al* (2016) surveyed police leadership about their perceptions of the use of BWV. While only a small minority believe the cameras would have an effect on police behaviour most were supportive of the use of the technology, and over half believe it would reduce complaints against the police. Additionally research by ODS Consulting (2011) and Sousa eta al (2015) found public support for BWV to be relatively high, with strong support for the notion that if could reduce crime and improve officer behaviour. More recently Crow et al (2017), in a sample of 670 respondents in Florida in the US, found that 87% of their respondents thought that BWVs would improve police officer behavior, and 78% though they would improve public views of police legitimacy. Moreover, 88.5% thought that the collection of evidence would be improved. In short, the public have tended to support the police view that level of accountability can be enhanced through the use of BWV. It is to this question of accountability we now turn.

Accountability

The special powers given to police including the powers to arrest, detain and to use force, place them in a unique position as a public service in democratic societies (Reiner 2010; Newburn and Reiner 2007). Such powers are generally viewed as necessary for police organisations to fulfil their functions of preventing and detecting crime, maintaining public order, and assisting the public. Police are also expected to uphold the rule of law and to conduct their work within lawful restraints. As the UNODC (2011:6) has stated, "appropriate police action involves finding a balance between serving the State (which, in itself, must serve the public interest), serving the public (with its potentially varying community needs), and police professionalism". Thus, democratic policing requires police to be answerable and accountable to a broad range of stakeholders for the actions they take (or don't take).

However, accountability is even more than this. While it seems like a relatively straightforward concept, it is, as Jones (2008) has argued, a "chameleon" term denoting a range of ideas such as "answerability, responsiveness, openness, efficient estate management… participation and obedience to external laws" (Day and Klein cited in Jones 2008:694). Accountability requires action on the part of police that, as Ericson (1995: 137) notes, "entails a narrative or record of events and an explanation of events - legitimate causes, justifications, excuses, blame, and remedies - that demonstrate one has acted in a credible manner".

There is also the question of who is to hold police accountable. Questions of accountability have long been about striking a balance "between citizen demands for effective, external police accountability mechanisms and a police preference for internal forms of accountability, in other words, for self-regulation" (Goldsmith 1991). In the Australian context at least, police organisations and police unions have long lobbied for the latter (Finnane 2002). However, while external accountability is increasingly important,

constructing a dualism between internal and external accountability may be counterproductive. In short, overreliance on external controls, be they policies or oversight bodies, may actually foster indifference or resistance within policing organisations actually weakening internal accountability systems (Stenning 1995, Jones 2008).

The UNODC (2011) has clearly set out what it suggests are key components and processes necessary to achieve police accountability. These include *inter-alia*:

- Legislation clearly specifying the functions and powers of the police (reflecting international human rights law) and instructions reflecting the letter of the law
- Adequate ongoing police training.
- Clear reporting procedures and facilities
- Adequate supervision
- A working culture of transparency and evaluation.
- Monitoring of police actions and operations by police leadership and external organs.
- Opportunities for the public to voice their concerns. Complaints procedures, both for police directly and to independent bodies
- Fair and effective procedures and policies on how to deal with misconduct.
- Scrutiny and oversight involving feedback to the police in order to improve future activities and prevent future wrongdoings.
- Reliable statistics on police performance.

These components and processes have significant implications for the ways in which BWV might (or might not) have a role to play in achieving greater levels of police accountability. Questions that arise include; how will the video images produced by police BWV be monitored to achieve transparency? Will this be just on the basis of complaints? On the basis for use as evidence? Or will there be more general or random monitoring with the aim of improving processes and effectiveness? How and when will video be accessed when a complaint is made? What processes will be in place to access the video and who will be able to see it? How will these processes aimed at transparency be extended to accountability? When will officers need to account for their behaviour and to whom?

Body Worn Video and Transparency

Public scrutiny of police has been increased phenomenally since digital video recording devices have become almost universally publically available. Police are regularly recorded by citizens using mobile phone camera technology or by other small digital recording devices (Lee and McGovern 2014). Such ‘sousveillance’ (Mann et al 2002) has seen an explosion in ‘copwatch’ type digital upload websites and immediate upload apps which attempt to expose police misconduct, discriminatory policing, and the use of excessive force. This places police organisations in the context of something of a technological arms race with the public whereby digital cameras become truth-telling devices of a somewhat adversarial system of visuality (Merzoeff 2011). As the US Department of Justice notes, the cameras “help police departments ensure events are also captured from an officers’ perspective” in a “world in which anyone with a cell phone camera can record video footage of a police encounter” (cited in Coudert et al 2015:750).

While capturing the 'officers' perspective means that evidence and transparency are likely to be positive by-products, "accountability has been the rallying motivation behind the introduction of body-worn cameras" (Mateescu, Rosenblat & boyd 2016: 25). That is, it is suggested that BWV will increase the level of accountability of police by adding a level of oversight and scrutiny to their behaviours and actions. However, often transparency is used as a proxy for accountability, and this slippage requires further discussion as there are important distinctions. For example, White (2014:12) notes that the positive aspects of BWV include "increased transparency and citizen views of police legitimacy; improved behaviour among both police officers and citizens; evidentiary benefits that expedite resolution of citizen complaints or lawsuits and that improve evidence for arrest and prosecution; and opportunities for police training". Similar sentiment is echoed by Coudert et al (2015) who suggest there are three layers to which accountability is proposed to be achieved by police BWV:

> First, they are anticipated to increase the transparency of police behaviour by documenting events, and as such to serve as a reliable source of evidence of interactions between the police and citizens. Then, by exposing bad and good behaviour, it is hoped that they will act as deterrent against the (mis)use of force and discrimination by police officers or violent behaviour of citizens against police. … Finally, because of this deterrent effect, body-worn cameras are expected to improve policing and restore the trust of communities in their police forces (Coudert et al 2015:750).

However, while transparency is often said to be a key element of accountability, it is – as the UNODC (2011) list of aspirations point out above – only one component to achieving accountability. Moreover, as Mateescu, Rosenblat & boyd (2016: 25) go on to argue in relation to BWV, there has not been "a corresponding vision for what accountability as a process should look like, or what structures are necessarily put in place to support that process".

When used by police, there is little doubt that BWV has potentially increased the visibility of police activities, behaviours, and practices. It has done likewise for those they film – during arrest and otherwise. And this 'new visibility' has added a layer of transparency to police activities (Goldsmith 2010). However, this alone is not accountability.

From Transparency to Accountability

It is possible to articulate at least four impediments in the linking of transparency and accountability in the use of BWV. It is also possible to articulate how such impediments might be reduced. First, Goldsmith follows Goffman (1971) and Manning (1977; 2001) in articulating that for police there is a line between the 'front' and 'back' stage performances of policing. This schema is important as it also suggests how BWV images might (or might not) be used to achieve increased accountability. The visible "front" stage sees actors appear in their desired and expected roles. The 'back' stage is the off-stage region where actors behave 'out of role'. If made visible these 'out of role' activities are likely to undermine the credibility of the performance (Goldsmith 2010). The capacity to use discretion in what to film and when to film means that police still have a significant control over what Goffman terms 'impression management' and whether the 'front' or 'back' stage performances are recorded. In some jurisdictions, BWVs provide a live stream to an operations centre that may

also monitor CCTV streams (Timan 2016) and such strategies could be used to increase levels of transparency (Taylor 2016). Removing discretion to turn the cameras on and off provides the conditions where more back stage may become more visible.

Second, there is the nature of the BWV technology being deployed. At present there are significant differences in the way in which cameras include meta-data such as time and date of recording that may render the footage admissible or inadmissible as evidence (Coudert et al 2015). Moreover, "stored or transmitted data must be encrypted and digitally signed to ensure confidentiality and prevent tampering" (Coudert et al 2015:750). Again, transparency does not automatically equate with accountability unless the technology its tamper-proof and the public believe it to be so.

Third, oversight policies, operational codes, and a working culture that promotes both transparency and accountability need to be in place at all levels of the organisational structure to ensure recorded material can actually be both accessible, and subjectable to appropriate oversight. For example, freedom of information requests from the public should provide a legal mechanism such that police do not have final veto on who can view the footage.

Finally, monitoring procedures both internally and externally need to accommodate independent oversight. This oversight needs not only to hold police accountable for their actions, but also have the capacity to be able to use video recordings to be able to provide feedback on how police might improve procedures. That is, accountability mechanisms are not simply static monitoring systems where transparency leads to accountability. They need to be dynamic feedback mechanisms that can facilitate cultural and procedural change. This would ensure accountability is not simply about the actions or behaviours of individual officers or groups of officers, but also holds broader police cultures, policies, and procedures accountable.

Methodology

Duma Questionnaire

Data for the current study were obtained using an addendum to the Drug Use Monitoring in Australia (DUMA) program. Established in 1999, the Drug Use Monitoring in Australia (DUMA) program is a quarterly collection of criminal justice and drug use information from police detainees at multiple sites (police stations or watch-houses) across Australia. It is conducted in a partnership between the Australian Institute of Criminology (AIC), State Police Services, and local researchers. Interviews are conducted quarterly with detainees who have been arrested in the previous 48 hours and are being held in custody in participating sites.

The DUMA program provides information on drugs and crime aimed at informing policy initiatives, and to provide information to inform law enforcement and other stakeholders on changes to the illicit drug market (Coghlan et al. 2015). All police detainees held in custody during periods of data collection are eligible to participate, unless they are too intoxicated, mentally unfit, potentially violent or aggressive, require an interpreter, or deemed ineligible by the police custody manager. Participation is voluntary and confidential. The DUMA self-report interview is independent of police and administered by a trained researcher. It comprises two key components—a core questionnaire and a quarterly addendum in which our survey questions were placed.

A key aim of the addendum was to examine police detainees' perspectives of the use of police body-worn video (BWV) cameras (See Gannoni et al 2016; Willis et al 2017; Taylor et al 2017. The addendum contained a mixture of closed and open-ended questions on awareness of the deployment of police BWVs, experience of police BWVs at point of arrest, and perceptions of police BWVs and how they impact on police behaviour, citizen behaviour, and investigation.

The Sample

The interviews were conducted during the third quarter (July–August) and fourth quarter (October–November) of 2015. In the third quarter of 2015, data were collected at four sites across Australia—Adelaide (SA), Brisbane (Qld), Perth (WA) and Surry Hills (NSW). In the fourth quarter of 2015, data were collected at four sites across Australia—Adelaide (SA), Brisbane (Qld), Perth (WA) and Bankstown (NSW).

A total of 907 detainees answered questions from the addendum questionnaire. The majority (83.4%) of the respondents were male. On average the detainees were 32.65 years of age (SD = 10.45 years) with the youngest respondent being 17 and the oldest being 79. Approximately a fifth (19.2%) of respondents identified as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander (ATSI). 37 respondents while answering the closed survey questions did not elaborate with open-ended responses. These have been counted as 'missing' from the qualitative analysis. Due to missing data 870 participants' responses were included in the qualitative analysis.

Analysis and coding

Following the implementation of the questionnaire the closed ended quantitative data was loaded in the statistical software package SPSS and analysed. The qualitative data was analysed using nVivo 11 qualitative data software. The data was double coded by two researchers to ensure inter-rater reliability. Through this coding process over 2500 individual statements were coded to a range of emergent themes for further analysis. This coding process also allowed for the quantification of the qualitative comments. In the following section we present selected closed question quantitative data that relates to accountability. We then move on to explore a number of themed qualitative responses to the open ended questions first presenting data on the number of times respondents articulated specific themes, then exploring many of these responses in more detail.

Results

Three quarters of police detainees generally agreed or strongly agreed that it is a 'good idea' for police officers to wear cameras with three quarters of respondents selecting this response (n=688; 75.9%, M = 3.87; SD = .905) (see Figure 1). The main reason that the detainees were supportive of the cameras appeared to be due to the impact that police body-worn cameras were believed to have on the behaviour of police and citizens during an arrest.

[Insert Figure 1 here]

Figure 1. Police detainee perceptions - It's a good idea for police to wear body-worn cameras (M = 3.87; SD = .905); Source: AIC DUMA 2015 (Computer file).

Excluding those that 'didn't know' or did not think it was a good idea, we then asked and open ended questions about what they thought was good about police use of BWVs.

Subsequently we coded over 1200 police detainees responses using nVivo 11 and six clear themes began to emerge. We have distilled these themes in Table 1 along with the number of times the theme was referred to by the respondents.

First a total of 1855 responses were coded as positive towards BWV as opposed to 673 that were coded negative (total 2578). This triangulates quite closely with the quantitative data suggesting that BWV was about three times more likely to be evaluated as positive than negative by respondents.

[Insert Table 1 Here]

Note: Detainees could specify multiple responses
Note: Includes only detainees who perceived police BWVs to be a "good idea"
Note: cases with missing data were excluded from analysis
Note: Some cases were coded to more than one category

As is illustrated in Table 1, the use of BWV was thought to increase transparency (481, 26%) enhance the validity of evidence for police (107) and public (56) (total 467, 25%), provide protection or safety for police officers (166) and the public (48) (total 377, 20%), increase police accountability (272, 15%), result in less aggression from police officers (134) and arrestees (19) (206, 11%), and to a much lesser extent reduce crime (21, 1%).

It should be noted that when we look at the ways in which respondents articulated their responses, the transparency and accountability categories overlap considerably. That is detainees believe that they (and police) would get fairer treatment on the basis of video evidence of the event. This of course also means that accountability overlaps with respondents' proclivity to articulate evidence as a key positive implication of the roll out of BWV. Indeed it could be suggested that each of the categories overlap to the point that forms of accountability are central concerns of many respondents.

Accountability: key themes and sub-themes

Themes and subthemes of accountability from the qualitative data are now discussed. While key themes are accountability and transparency sub-themes discussed include misconduct, corruption, and the use of excessive force.

Transparency: Telling the Truth

Clearly many respondents believed the camera would not lie, and could deliver 'true' evidential facts about an arrest or other incident. This is demonstrated in the 481 mentions related to transparency by the respondents. As this respondent notes:

> "There is a correct account of what happened" (Male 33).

Another suggests that it:

> "Shows what the police did" (Male 33).

And as the following respondents notes;

> "It shows the truth. The police can't put in extra stuff" (Male 20 ATSI).

> "It stops police indiscrepancies, make them accountable for behaviour" (Male 39).

So clearly BWV was seen to offer clarity and truth. However, this representation of the truth and transparency cut both ways. There was a sense that the camera could reveal the truth and accuracy about what had occurred, not just in regard to police behaviour, but citizen behaviour as well:

> "It shows the truth, stops the police from lying to people, and people form lying to police" (Male 29).

The respondents also made the link between transparency and accountability, inferring that one would lead to the other:

> "Accountability on behalf of police… make sure facts are facts" (Male 26).

Further to this

> "Accuracy and a truthful account of whatever took place" (Female 50).

And, as the following respondent notes, BWV:

> "helps get clarity around what happened" (Male 27) .

Respondents also often associated transparency with fairness. This included noting that the camera could provide a:

> "Fairer outcome with arresting clarity of events" (Male 37 ATSI).

Many of our respondents noted that video evidence could ensure police charged alleged offenders with the correct offence, or indeed stop them from charging people with crimes they did not commit:

> "A lot of people get away with a lot of things…and it's not even true what they said the police charge people with things they didn't do" (Male 33 ATSI).

Related to transparency was also that respondents believed that BWV – and the 'fairness" and 'accuracy' it made possible, would ensure police did not use excessive force, as we explore the following section.

Police use of Excessive Force

Making police accountable through the evidence collected on BWV also suggested to respondents that police would be less likely to use excessive force. There was a sense that the video evidence could discourage police using excessive force in dealing with the public or during arrest for example. As detailed above 206 respondents saw BWV as potentially reducing the use of force of violence, both on the part of police and citizens:

> "At least when you are getting arrested there is a third party video-taping. A lot of officers like to get heavy handed" (Male 29).

The misuse of police power in general was a concern that respondents believed BWV would help address. As noted in the comments below:

"Police can't get violent and power hungry" (Male 18 ATSI).

"Police can't go overboard with violence" (Male 40).

Further to this point, respondents suggested the BWV would be a tool in ensuring police adopt more ethical behaviours.

"Because it makes them (police) behave more ethically" (Male 34)

This misconduct extended to what some clearly saw as corruption, as the next section details.

Corruption

Many respondents asserted that BWV this could help uncover or reduce police corruption, again clearly linking to the question of accountability. For this respondent it was the only good thing about the cameras:

"I don't think there is a good thing besides stopping corruptions" (sic) (Male 27).

This sentiment was backed up by others:

"Hopefully if they wear them they won't be as corrupt" (Male 22).

"Stops the corruption and aggression that a lot of police officers use" (Male 21).

Many connected the possibility of corruption with the use of excessive force:

"So they can't harm the public, stops corruption" (Male 25 ATSI).

"Stops them acting out & them making false claims/ excessive force - there are corrupt coppers" (Male 47).

Some respondents also connected the question of evidence to reducing corruption:

"Evidence, less corruption" (Male 45 ATSI).

And while perhaps not as serious as excessive force or corruption, BWV was seen to potentially address lower levels of misconduct.

Misconduct

Specific forms of misconduct were also articulated:

"Helps if police are bullying/wrongfully arresting, entering without warrant" (Female 36).

BWV was seen to:

"Pick up misconduct, can double check on areas of doubt" (male 31).

Again, this often cut both ways – police and public:

"To stop corruption on both sides as well as misconduct" (Male 32).

Thus, some detainees suggested that through the use of BWV bad behaviour and lies could be reduced on the part of police. That:

"Police behave in a fair way" (Male 39).

"Police can't behave badly" (Male 23).

"Police can't pull cheap shots" (Male 22).

"Police can't tell lies" (Female 43 ATSI).

Importantly transparency and the limiting of aggression, corruption, misconduct, and the assumption of fairness were all wrapped up in the expectation that there would be increased accountability.

Accountability

All these themes can be themed under the notion of accountability. Indeed, 272 responses were collated under the theme of accountability. Holding people – not just police – accountable for their actions and interactions. Thus, BWV could:

"Hold people accountable" (Male 33).

Such sentiments were regularly repeated:

"accountability" (Male 38).

"accountability on behalf of police" (Male 26).

"Allows people to look back and see what the police did" (Male 20 ATSI).

There was also an expectation that police management will have a role in this oversight.

"Protect police & letting higher ups know what's going on" (Male 26).

"Holds them accountable for their actions. Makes them hold their tongue" (Male 37 ATSI).

And as suggested above, there were clear links between the discourses of accountability and fairness:

"Honesty and fairness when dealing with the public" (Male 35).

And as this respondent clearly believed, this accountability will work in the interests of those at the receiving end of police interventions:

"Police officers will be held accountable for their actions, works in my favour really" (Male 23).

Finally, again demonstrating the link between accountability and transparency:

"Chain of accountability & transparency" (Male 23).

Negative Sentiments

As we outlined above, there was still a significant minority of respondents sceptical of the capacity of BWV to achieve its promise of accountability. Overall there were 673 comments coded negatively. Largely this group reflect the criticisms made in the scholarly work on the topic as outlined above. 197 of these concerned the mis-use of technology that – while it may give the veneer of transparency, did not make police accountable:

> "They have an upper advantage - they can provoke you to behave in a certain way & then turn the camera on" (Male 24).
>
> "They only use it for their self" (Female 18 ATSI).
>
> "Being able to turn it on and off whenever they want to look good" (Male 32).
>
> "They can still manipulate the data by turning the cameras on and off. When people are being arrested their emotions can be distorted/high and this may not reflect their true nature. it provides a distorted picture of someone" (Female 40).

Privacy was another key issue with 193 comments coded in to this theme:

> "They film you without permission" (Male 42).
>
> "They can catch you with out you knowing" (Male 29).

And finally, some respondents noted that the police should be trustworthy without cameras:

> "It shouldn't have to come to police wearing them - should trust police and public" (Male 40).
>
> "Fuck the cameras - it's all about respect between people at the end of the day" (male 24).

For the respondents then, the promise of BWV to achieve a greater level of accountability, a claim made by police organisations themselves, was reinforced, but it was not without some strong caveats. The question remains as to whether the 'new visibility' made possible by BWV can be converted to or extended to provide a new accountability?

Discussion

The majority of respondents expressed clear beliefs that police BWV could increase the accountability of police. While accountability was by no means the only theme, to emerge from the questionnaire, its prominence makes it well worthy of further discussion and analysis. Sub themes of accountability expressed included that officers could not so easily 'lie', that they would 'behave more ethically', be less likely to 'abuse their power', and be less likely to resort to 'violence'.

However, as the discussion above indicates, the fact that BWV has the capacity to positively support accountability measures, does not mean that simply wearing BWV and recording selected incidents is going to deliver these levels of accountability. And while a minority of our respondents expressed negative sentiments about the capacity of police to tamper with data or selectively record incidents, the positives expressed significantly outweighed the negatives overall. In this sense our respondents expressed sentiments largely in line with the discourses generated by police organisations themselves and the general public that largely support the uptake of BWV.

This acceptance of BWV may seem counterintuitive, given the nature of our sample and the contexts of these respondents. However, as Crow et al (2017:16) have indicated, support for forms of surveillance such as BWV are "likely related to the increasingly normative nature of video surveillance throughout society". That is, surveillance is so pervasive we increasingly

just accept that surveillance will occur and in some contexts even willingly embrace it, perhaps against our best interests (Lyon 2008).

Reaching the levels of accountability expected by our respondents will be a challenge for police organisations. This challenge reaches back through chains of evidence to the moment an officer or organisation decides to film or not film (Taylor 2016). It includes whether the video captures 'back' or 'front' of stage images (Goldsmith 2010). It includes how data is transported, stored, encrypted, and subjected to meta-data identification. If processes and procedures along the chain are appropriately established and followed a greater level of transparency can definitely be put in place. However, beyond this there will be the requirement for policy and procedural frameworks, appropriate codes of conduct, and ultimately internal and external oversight and feedback to extend this transparency to produce the level of accountability expected of our respondents and indeed promised by police organisations themselves. Without these interlocking layers of policy and process, BWV might fail to deliver on its potential to improve aspects of policing such as greater accountability and instead become just the latest in a long line of fetishised new technologies embraced by police organisations (Manning 2011; 2015).

There is little doubt that BWV has a capacity to contribute towards increased accountability in policing. But like other technologies there is also the capacity for police to integrate such developments in a way that suggests accountability without ever achieving it (Mawby 2002). Citizens, detainees, and police organisations appear to agree on this point. Moreover, implementing the cameras alone will not hold police accountable in the way many may believe. Similar to the early promises of CCTV that viewed it as a 'magic bullet' (Graham, 1988) for solving crime, BWV has been aggrandised – purported by politicians and police organisations alike as the panacea to poor policing practices. However, as it solves some issues it freights in others, relating to privacy, camera view bias and discretionary usage, to name just a few.

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